12-9-1964

Will Catholic Higher Education Survive until 1984?

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WILL CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION SURVIVE UNTIL 1984?

The Annual Ledesma(1) Lecture of Loyola University,
Los Angeles, California

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Wednesday, December 9, 1964

8:00 P. M.

((1) The Ledesma Lecture is named after Father James Ledesma, S. J. (1519 - 1575) who in 1562 codified the first plan of Jesuit education and thereby provided the foundation for the 1599 Retio Studiorum, the fundamental document of Jesuit education.)

Catholic colleges and universities have meant something almost completely different in each generation of their existence in America. In the generation since the end of World War II many Catholic universities [1] have for the first time shifted their focus from being commuter colleges for sons and grandsons of immigrants from the lower middle class to becoming residence universties with a student body and a faculty recruited on a regional or even national basis.

How will the next twenty years shift the focus and alter the purposes of Catholic universities? It seems clear that the complex forces operating in this area will inevitably have a revolutionary impact on Catholic higher education. Let us try to analyze these factors under the following three separate but closely interrelated headings:

1. The sources of financial assistance for Catholic universites in the next twenty years,

2. The personnel -- religious and lay -- available to Catholic higher education in the coming generation, and,

3. The changes in the curriculum of Catholic universites which will be necessary before 1984.

A careful examination of these three central issues confronting Catholic institutions of higher learning in the next two decades may supply some basis by which we can make a forecast about the question whether Catholic higher education can really survive until 1984.

I. SOURCES OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES

No combination of factors can be imagined which will furnish a firm foundation for the thesis that private colleges in America in the next generation are going

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1. The name university will be used throughout this paper as a term generally interchangeable with the term Catholic college.

to retain that level of prestige and influence which they now possess. The tides of history seem to flowing irreversibly towards the creation of new and the enlargement of existing state-related colleges and universities.

One of the truly frightening phenomenon of contemporary times is the absence for some fifty years now of the establishment of new private colleges and universities. The apparent lack of desire or inability of our affluent society to create private universities is indeed almost an appalling phenomenon. With the exception of Catholic colleges -- most of them for women only -- the twentieth century in America has witnessed the establishment of very few private colleges or universities. After Protestant denominations ceased to establish colleges in the last century no other private agency in America took up this task. Higher education unconsciously was handed over to the state.

Catholic higher education consequently has been seeking to grow in prestige and stature during the very period when all private initiative to establish and maintain non-public colleges and universities has reached its lowest point in American history. Catholic universities have, to be sure, powerful allies in the many prestige-laden post-Protestant institutions of higher learning. But this alliance until recently has consisted merely in the mutual use of the term "private" or Church-related" as a designation; in more recent times the alliance has tended to become a union mainly for the purposes of convincing philanthropic foundations as well as state and Federal agencies that non-public colleges and universities need and deserve new sources of financing.

Catholic colleges and universities, in other words, have never had any real ideological partners, -- institutions which sought to communicate a vision of Christian reality or a set of spiritual values. This uniqueness and aloneness of Catholic colleges and universties has probably been one of the central reasons for the lack of empathy towards these institutions on the part of so many individuals.

Every trend, furthermore, seems to suggest that most of America's

quondam Protestant Church-related colleges will continue to shed whatever vestiges of "Church-relatedness" remain in their charters or their customs. This movement to sever all bonds which higher education has had with religion in America will continue to render Catholic universities more conspicuously unique because of their undeniably religious purpose.

The "Church-relatedness" of Catholic universities will be a key factor -- possibly a fatal defect -- in the formulas which will be adopted for the distribution of Federal and state grants to insitutions of higher learning. The first Federal appropriation for such grants has fortunately avoided the use of any formula by which a Church-related college would be ineligible for assistance under the College Facilities Act of 1963. This bill makes money available to all colleges but only for the construction of buildings designed as sites for instruction or research in the natural or physical sciences, mathematics, modern foreign languages and engineering. Money is also available under this bill for library construction.

The importance of this monumental legislation and its inclusion as eligible beneficiaries of all Church-related colleges can hardly be exaggereated. The College Facilities Act, signed into law by President Johnson in December 1963, has been compared in importance to the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862. Unlike the Morrill Act, however, the 1963 legislation did not throw the enormous prestige and power of the Federal government solely behind public universities. The 1963 Act did, however, prefer the sciences to the humanities in a most undesirable and unfortunate way, -- a point which will be discussed later in this paper.

Three events which suggest that Church-related colleges might not always be included in future Federal aid bills are noteworthy:

1. It should not be forgotten that 26 Senators or over one-fourth of the U. S. Senate voted to exclude all Church-related colleges from any participation in

Federal aid for higher education. It is also well to recall that, by a vote of 45 to 33, a provision authorizing judicial review of all grants to Church-related colleges was passed by the Senate. This amendment -- deleted by the conference committee in Congress -- would have raised a substantial question about the constitutionality of all grants to denominational institutions. Its enactment as a part of future legislation is not improbable.

2. A lawsuit now being tried in Baltimore has challenged the constitutionality of state grants to four Church-related colleges in Maryland, two of them Protestant and two Catholic. It is significant to note that the executive committee of the National Education Association has pledged $15,000 to help defray the costs of the plaintiffs in this litigation. The plantiff of record in the case is the Horace Mann League, -- a by-invitation-only association of public school administrators; many other similar groups are prepared to be plaintiffs-in-fact.

No one can predict the outcome of this case but the very existence of this well-financed lawsuit suggests the extent of the powerful forces which are opposed to all tax support for sectarian colleges.

3. A more subtle and perhaps a more serious threat to participation in Federal funds by Church-related colleges is the attitude advocated by the American Civil Liberties Union and undoubtedly endorsed by a wide variety of individuals and groups. The ACLU would insist that public money should go to Church-related colleges only if these institutions comply with these three norms:

(a) Admit all students without regard to religion,

(b) Require no course in theology or attendance at a religious exercise,

(c) Place the control of the college in the hands of academic and not ecclesiastical officials.

The three foregoing items indicate that aid to Church-related colleges -- and particularly to Catholic universities -- may well confront opposition of a formidable nature. Federal funds, however, and whatever funds exist on the state level for higher education are still available to Church-related universities. If such aid became unconstitutional the chances of survival for Catholic higher education would be substantially diminished.

In view of the foregoing it need hardly be emphasized that the officials of Catholic universities should be alert and aroused concerning the powerful forces which seek to render all Church-related colleges ineligible for tax support, -- even for support for secular objectives totally unrelated to the religious purposes of these institutions.

Catholics must be diligent furthermore in exploring and pressing for several other proposals which would bring Federal or state financial assistance to all colleges. Let us touch on three of the most important of these proposals, -- Federal scholarships, the extension of state programs to aid higher education and the proposed creation of a National Humanities Foundation.

FEDERAL SCHOLARSHIPS - One of the tragedies of the College Facilities Act of 1963 was the deletion by Congress from that bill of an important proposal for the creation of Federally financed scholarships. The proposed plan would have been similar to the National Merit Scholarships but would have placed more emphasis on the financial need of the applicants.

It is uncertain how much pressure exists against the proposal of Federal scholarships; what is certain, however, is the lack of widespread grass-roots support for this idea. One of the persistent myths which inhibits enthusiasm within Catholic and other circles for Federal aid programs is the almost pathological fear that "Federal aid means Federal control." This allegation -- which bedevils so much Catholic thought on all phases of Federal aid to education -- simply cannot stand up upon an analysis of the countless existing state laws which now regulate but do not "control" Catholic schools. One can argue persuasively, furthermore, that Federal regulation and Federal standards would in general be more desirable for Catholic higher education than comparable norms established by the individual states.

Closely related to the plan for Federal scholarships are the various proposals which would permit tax deductions or tax credits for the payment of tuition

to a private college. The firmest opposition to these schemes comes apparently from the U. S. Treasury and the office of internal revenue. Any law along this line will almost inevitably produce serious inequities in that its provisions will tend to favor those more affluent taxpayers who are in a position to take advaniage of liberalized tax credits and tax deductions.

THE STATES AND HIGHER EDUCATION - State plans to aid students applying for or attending college have grown so rapidly and so confusedly that generalizations about them are difficult. It is clear on the one hand that these plans -- and especially the one in New York State -- may mean the very survival of certain underfinanced liberal arts colleges. On the other hand these state plans have the most serious limitations; the most lamentable limitation in the New York plan is the fact that a student residing in New York must attend a college located within New York state in order to benefit by the scholar incentive plan. This type of undesirable "state control" will continue and will be multiplied until or unless there is a national policy and an adequate Federal program to assist qualified students to attend the college of their choice.

It is to be regretted that Catholics at the state level have not in general been particularly active in advocating programs of tax support for students attending private colleges. In view of the fact that 41 percent of all persons enrolled in American colleges are in private institutions Catholic leadership on the state level might bring about alliances among private colleges which could conceivably change the entire future of non-public higher education in America.

As we will try to indicate later in this talk, these projected alliances would be more easily reached and maintained if there were a deeper understanding of the liberal arts curriculum which is the broad heritage shared by Catholic and other private institutions of higher learning in America.

A NATIONAL HUMANITIES FOUNDATION -- The National Science Foundation is a model of the ingenuity of Congress in implementing an idea which has been nationally endorsed by a broad-based consensus. The NSF gives Federal money to an independent, academically prestige-laden group for the purposes of promoting research in the natural and physical sciences.

However commendable the NSF has been it seems clear that its emphasis on the physical sciences has tended to change the orientation of colleges and even to distort the programs of graduate schools. Clearly a National Humanities Foundation is needed in order to bring balance into the Federal government's role in the financing of higher education.

It is to be hoped therefore that Catholics in higher education and that Catholic opinion everywhere will support and promote the conclusions of the Report of the Commission on the Humanities, a 222 page document issued in mid-1964 by a special blue-ribbon task force of the American Council of Learned Societies. This most significant report recommends the establishment of a National Humanities Foundation, an agency to be governed by 24 members selected from academic and professional groups by the President of the United States.

The definition of the "humanities" which the Foundation would foster is broad and inclusive in character including, in fact, "the history and comparison of religion...." The overall objective of the Foundation would be "to ensure that suitable means are provided for educating and developing scholars, artists and teachers at every stage of their growth." It is hardly possible to exaggerate the desirability of the National Humanities Foundation.

The future of all private colleges -- and in particular Catholic colleges -- depends in large part on the future status of Federal aid, assistance by the several states and the establishment of a National Humanities Foundation. Indeed the very survival

of Catholic higher education until the year 1984 may well depend on developments in the areas described above.

Some Catholic observers would, of course, object to the very thought that Catholic colleges might not survive. With all due respect to such an outlook all of us must confront the sobering fact that Catholic colleges in all of American history have been operated almost entirely on revenue from tuition with no state or Federal aid and with minimal endowment. In all candor we must destroy every illusion that we have that it will be possible to maintain Catholic colleges in the future under these conditions. This blunt conclusion may appear to be more of a possibility when we consider the second fundamental problem facing Catholic universities in the next generation, -- the availability of teaching and research personnel, both lay and religious.

II. WHO WILL BE ON THE FACULTIES OF CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES IN 1984?

The greatest financial asset which Catholic colleges have enjoyed up to the present has been a faculty composed of men and women who are members of religious orders. It seems clear that the present 3 to 1 ratio of laymen to religious which obtains in most Catholic colleges for men may be 8 to 1 or 10 to 1 in 1984. The paucity of vocations, the new commitments domestic and foreign of the religious orders which maintain colleges in America, the growing conviction that priests, nuns and brothers should be appointed to college faculties only if they have at least the appropriate terminal degree, -- all these factors suggest that Catholic colleges in the next twenty years will be engaged in what probably might be described as the greatest man-hunt in the history of higher education in America.

The most tragic fact in the whole situation is that the personnel that will be needed simply will not exist. Projected college enrollment for 1980, according

to a recent Carnegie Foundation study, will be 10,200,000, -- compared to 5,200,000 in 1965.

A total of 6,900,000 students will probably be in college by 1970. This means that in the next five years alone 37,500 new faculty members will be needed although not more than 20,000 persons are expected to get their doctorates before that time. More than half of this number, furthermore, will not enter college teaching.

The Carnegie study of college faculty needs predicts that the wealthiest private universities will suffer the least as a result of the shortage of new qualified faculty persons and that the newer and the less-oriented-to-research universities will suffer the most.

The 10,200,000 students expected to be in college in 1980 will, according to several studies, include some 90% of all Catholics attending college. Catholic colleges in 1980 will probably enroll about 10 percent of all Catholics enrolled in college -- compared to about 30 percent of all Catholics who in 1964 are enrolled in Catholic colleges.

How can America's Catholic universities recruit qualified professors for their faculties during the next two decades? This is the question upon the resolution of which the very survival of Catholic higher education depends.

If the seriousness and the urgency of this problem were comprehended on a widespread basis conceivably a nationally accepted plan to train professors for Catholic colleges could be devised. National plans exist within the Catholic community to recruit lay missionaries, prospective seminarians, and other temporary and permanent functionaries of the Church.

Could the hierarchy, officials of Catholic universities and all Newman Club chaplains and personnel collaborate for the purpose of enhancing the career or vocation of the Catholic college professor? A national foundation and a central office could be established to bring the vast resources of the Church to assist in the solution of what

is surely one of the most critical problems confronting the Church in the next generation, -- the training and recruitment of a learned group of scholars for the faculties of the nation's Catholic colleges and universities.

For the first time in American history college graduates who are Catholics are entering doctoral programs in the arts and sciences in a proportion equal to the proportion of Catholics in the general population. Opportunities for these Catholics will be plentiful. Many will and should become professors at non-Catholic universities. But unless a well organized effort is made by Catholic universities to secure their proportionate share of the talent of this group the year 1984 may reveal the unpleasant and unfortunate phenomenon that most of the more talented Catholic Ph.D.'s have shunned the faculties of Catholic universities during the critical years from 1964 to 1984.

III. THE CURRICULUM OF CATHOLIC COLLEGES IN THE NEXT GENERATION

The nature and extent of the curriculum in Catholic colleges in the next two decades will in all probability depend heavily on the success or failure of Catholic colleges with regard to the two problems discussed above -- finances and faculty. It is safe to predict that Catholic colleges -- along with many other private institutions of higher learning -- will adapt (or compromise) their curriculum in order to take advantage of Federal programs or available faculty. The pragmatic purposes of students can also be expected to play a part in the formation of the curriculum of Catholic and other colleges; the utilitarian purposes of students in the 1930's led not a few Catholic colleges to establish separate schools of business administration, -- units which today generally attract the poorer student and the less qualified faculty member.

If Catholic colleges are to have some abiding, fixed norm by which they can determine their curriculum and resist the countless pressures that will lead to unwise decisions the central concept to be explored, cherished and deepened is,

in this writer's judgment, the familiar but still widely misunderstood notion of a liberal arts education.

The one bond which more than any other unites Catholic colleges with thenation's private, Church-related or post-Protestant colleges is a mutual devotion to the liberal arts and the humanities. By a strange paradox Catholic colleges have generally remained loyal to the liberal arts more steadfastly than the once Protestant colleges which transmitted the humanistic learning of Europe to American life by means of a four-year liberal arts college. Catholic colleges have from the beginning been in the mainstream of the finest traditions in curriculum of American higher education. Indeed one could say that Catholic colleges by their inclusion of philosophy and theology in their curriculum have perpetuated medieval and Renaissance literature and learning more faithfully and more fully than most non-Catholic liberal arts colleges.

Why is it then that partnerships and alliances between Catholic colleges emphasizing the liberal arts and private non-Catholic colleges with the same emphasis have been minimal and sporadic? A thousand theological and sociological reasons could probably be advanced to explain the walls between liberal arts colleges under Catholic auspices and the same type of institution under different auspices.

Whatever these reasons might be it is clearly urgent that now there be formed an alliance, a friendship, a union of all private liberal arts colleges. The onrush of scientific and technological education financed by the state or by industry is so overwhelming that the majesty, the indispensability and the inherent value of education in the liberal arts and the humanities is being obscured, overlooked and obliterated.

It is a truism that the emergence of the liberal arts and the humanities as inherently precious occurred at the first Catholic universities in the West -- at Paris, Oxford, Cambridge and Bologna. Christianity and humanism have from the beginning been partners, -- each enhancing and ennobling the other. The great humanistic traditions

of medieval and post-Reformation England were radiations of Christian culture and were implanted in America by Christian colleges and universities patterned after English models. Catholic higher education in America has followed in that tradition and indeed has enriched it by the addition of philosophy and theology to the curriculum of the Catholic college.

How then can Catholic universities and other liberal arts colleges unite to preserve and perpetuate their mutual devotion to the humanities? Clearly the next two decades will bring crucial and critical years for the future of the liberal arts and the humanities. The Christian outlook which made more sacred all human values and all humanistic literature and art has been displaced on many campuses by the approach of secular humanism which more and more seeks to overlook and remove from the humanities the Scriptural, sacred or even the spiritual origins and content of the liberal arts.

The dominance and supremacy of secular humanism on non-Catholic campuses, -- as well as throughout the nation, -- has resulted in the widespread sentiment that a Catholic college in teaching the liberal arts and the humanities so permeates these subjects with religious values that it "indoctrinates" its students. This allegation that the Catholic college has a pre-established set of values leads naturally to the common assumption that the freedom to teach and to learn is severely restricted at a college or university maintained by the Church.

The feeling or conviction on the part of countless non-Catholics that the faculty and students at a Catholic college do not really have freedom of thought and inquiry is probably the ultimate and most fundamental reason for the existence of walls between America's liberal arts colleges and Catholic institutions in the same category. Catholic colleges are deemed not to be "open" institutions; their curriculum is thought to be only a necessary prop for the teaching of religious doctrines.

Catholic colleges consequently must strive to destroy the barriers

that exist between them and other liberal arts colleges. The bonds that unite these two types of institutions are far greater than the differences which separate them. The love of learning and devotion to the humanities which form the central ethos of the liberal arts college are not eroded but rather enhanced if they are pursued within a context of religious values.

In the next twenty years we will probably witness the severest test in American history of the durability and indeed the viability of the liberal arts college. Catholic colleges will be in the eye of the storm that will try to substitute science for the humanities and technocracy for the liberal arts. Catholics can hope to survive that storm only through a close alliance of all private liberal arts colleges. Catholic colleges, both for their own protection and for the preservation of the liberal arts tradition, should be not merely partners in the coming together of the nation's non-public colleges but should be a leader in the struggle to save the private independent college from the tidal waves of government-sponsored institutions of higher learning whose purposes and orientation will tend to be pragmatic, utilitarian and secularistic.

CONCLUSIONS

From the foregoing examination of the problems relating to Federal aid for higher education, the future availability of faculty personnel and the contemporary status of the private liberal arts college it can be clearly seen that the future of Catholic higher education is by no means assured. Several Catholic colleges may within the next generation go the way of the countless private Protestant-oriented academies or high schools which could not survive in this century in view of the growth of public secondary schools. On the other hand if some Federal or state financing becomes available many Catholic colleges will be able at least to survive, -- even though their academic performance may be marginal and their faculty and students somewhat less than superior.

The perils and pitfalls which lie ahead for all private institutions of higher learning will for several reasons be more serious for many Catholic colleges than for similar non-Church-related institutions. Jesuit colleges and universities will confront the same problems but because of their age and resources will probably be more in a position to give leadership than some other Catholic colleges. That leadership in fact will be indispensably necessary for a resolution of the many problems with respect to finances and faculty which Catholic universities will have to contend with in the next two decades.

Let us therefore try constantly to be realistic and far-sighted about the future of America's Catholic colleges. Their future will not take care of itself. Their prospects for growth and development will depend in a most significant way on the public policy and the public opinion which emerges within the next few years.

What we need is something of the vision of the Jesuit educator for whom the Ledesma Lecture is named. In the spirit of Father Ledesma let us analyze and articulate the values and goals which the Church-related liberal arts college in America seeks to transmit. With a clear and profound understanding of these values let us courageously determine that we will take every step necessary to guarantee that the next twenty years will <u>not</u> bring about the decline and fall of Catholic higher education in America but rather that in the year 1984 the nation and the world will behold in America's Catholic colleges and universities the pervasive presence of academic excellence.